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THE SIFTED
GRAIN AND THE GRAIN
SIFTERS

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THE SIFTED GRAIN AND THE GRAIN SIFTERS¹

ON occasions such as this, a text upon which to discourse is not usual; I propose to venture an exception to the rule. I shall, moreover, offer not one text only, but two; taken, the first, from a discourse prepared in the full theological faith of the seventeenth century, the other from the most far-reaching scientific publication of the century now drawing to its close.

"God sifted a whole Nation that He might send choice Grain over into this Wilderness," said William Stoughton in the election sermon preached according to custom before the Great and General Court of Massachusetts in April, 1668. To the same effect Charles Darwin wrote in 1871: "There is apparently much truth in the belief that the wonderful progress of the United States, as well as the character of the people, are the results of natural selection; for the more energetic, restless and courageous men from all parts of Europe have emigrated during the last ten or twelve generations to that great country and have there succeeded best;" and the quiet, epoch-marking, creed-shaking naturalist then goes on to express this startling judgment, which, uttered by an American, would have been deemed the very superlative of national vanity:—"Looking to the distant future, I do not think [it] an exaggerated view [to say that] all other series of events—as that which resulted in the culture of mind in Greece, and that which resulted in the Empire of Rome—only appear to have purpose and value when viewed in connection with, or rather as subsidiary to, the great stream of Anglo-Saxon emigration to the West."²

Such are my texts; but, while I propose to preach from them largely and to them in a degree, I am not here to try to instruct

¹ An Address at the Dedication of the Building of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin at Madison, October 19, 1900.

² *The Descent of Man* (ed. 1874), II, 218, 219.

you to-day in the history of your own state of Wisconsin, or in the magic record relating to the development of what we see fit to call the Northwest. Indeed I am not here as an individual at all ; nor as one in any way specially qualified to do justice to the occasion. I am here simply as the head for the time being of what is unquestionably the oldest historical society in America, and, if reference is made to societies organized exclusively for the preservation of historical material and the furtherance of historical research, one than which few indeed anywhere in existence are more ancient of years. As the head of the Massachusetts Historical Society, I have been summoned to contribute what I may in honor of the completion of this edifice, the future home of a similar society, already no longer young ;—a society grown up in a country which, when the Massachusetts institution was formed, was yet the home of aboriginal tribes,—a forest-clad region known only to the frontiersman and explorer. Under such circumstances, I did not feel that I had a right not to answer the call. It was as if in our older Massachusetts time the pastor of the Plymouth, or of the Salem or Boston church had been invited to the gathering of some new brotherhood in the Connecticut Valley, or the lighting of another candle of the Lord on the Concord or the Nashua, there to preach the sermon of ordination and extend the right hand of fellowship.

And in this connection let me here mention one somewhat recondite historical circumstance relating to this locality. You here may be more curiously informed, but few indeed in Massachusetts are to-day knowing of the fact that this portion of Wisconsin—Madison itself, and all the adjoining counties—was once, territorially, a part of the royally assigned limits of Massachusetts. Yet such was undisputably the fact ; and it lends a certain propriety, not the less poetic because remote, to my acceptance of the part here to-day assigned me.

Accepting that part, I none the less, as I have said, propose to break away from what is the usage in such cases. That usage, if I may have recourse to an old theological formula, is to improve the occasion historically. An address, erudite and bristling with statistics, would now be in order. An address in which the gradual growth of the community or the institution should be developed, and its present condition set forth ; with suitable reference to the days of small things, and a tribute of gratitude to the founders, and those who patiently built their lives into the edifice, and made of it their monument. The names of all such should, I agree, be cut deep over its portico ; but this task, eminently proper on such occasions, I, a stranger, shall not undertake here and now to perform.

For it others are far better qualified. I do not, therefore, propose to tell you of the St. Francis Xavier mission at Green Bay, or of Nicollet; of Jacques Cartier, of Marquette or of Radisson, any more than of those two devoted benefactors and assiduous secretaries of this institution, Lyman C. Draper and Reuben G. Thwaites; but, leaving them, and their deeds and services, to be commemorated by those to the manner born, and, consequently, in every respect better qualified than I for the work, I propose to turn to more general subjects and devote the time allotted me to generalities, and to the future rather than to the past.

In an address delivered about eighteen months ago before the Massachusetts Historical Society, I discussed in some detail the modern conception of history as compared with that which formerly prevailed. I do not now propose to repeat what I then said. It is sufficient for my present purpose to call attention to what we of the new school regard as the dividing line between us and the historians of the old school, the first day of October, 1859,—the date of the publication of Darwin's "*Origin of Species*;" the book of his immediately preceding the "*Descent of Man*," from which my text for to-day was taken. On the first day of October, 1859, the Mosaic cosmogony finally gave place to the Darwinian theory of evolution. Under the new dispensation, based not on chance or an assumed supernatural revelation, but on a patient study of biology, that record of mankind known as history, no longer a mere succession of traditions and annals, has become a unified whole,—a vast scheme systematically developing to some result as yet not understood. Closely allied to astronomy, geology and physics, the study of modern history seeks a scientific basis from which the rise and fall of races and dynasties will be seen merely as phases of a consecutive process of evolution,—the evolution of man from his initial to his ultimate state. When this conception was once reached, history, ceasing to be a mere narrative, made up of disconnected episodes having little or no bearing on each other, became a connected whole. To each development, each epoch, race and dynasty its proper place was to be assigned; and to assign that place was the function of the historian. Formerly each episode was looked upon as complete in itself; and, being so, it had features more or less dramatic or instructive, and, for that reason, tempting to the historian, whether investigator or literary artist,—a Freeman or a Froude. Now, the first question the historian must put to himself relates to the proper adjustment of his particular theme to the entire plan,—he is shaping the fragment of a vast mosaic. The incomparably greater portion of history has, it is needless to say,

little value,—not much more than the biography of the average individual ; it is a record of small accomplishment,—in many instances a record of no accomplishment at all, perhaps of retrogression ; — for we cannot all be successful, nor even everlastingly and effectively strenuous. Among nations in history, as among men we know, the commonplace is the rule ; but, whether ordinary or exceptional,—conspicuous or obscure,—each has its proper place, and to it that place should be assigned.

Having laid down this principle, I, eighteen months ago, proceeded to apply it to the society I was then addressing, and to the history of the commonwealth whose name that society bears ; and I gave my answer to it, such as that answer was. The same question I now put as concerns Wisconsin ; and to that also I propose to venture an answer. As my text has indicated, that answer, also, will not, in a sense, be lacking in ambition. In the history of Wisconsin I shall seek to find verification of what Darwin suggested,—evidence of the truth of the great law of natural selection as applied also to man.

Thus stated, the theme is a large one, and may be approached in many ways ; and, in the first place, I propose to approach it in the way usual with modern historical writers. I shall attempt to assign to Wisconsin its place in the sequence of recent development ; for it is only during the last fifty years that Wisconsin has exercised any, even the most imperceptible, influence on what is conventionally agreed upon as history. That this region before the year 1848 had an existence, we know ; as we also know that, since the last glacial period when the earth's surface hereabouts assumed its present geographical form,—some five thousand, or, perhaps, ten, or even twenty thousand years ago,—it has been occupied by human beings,—fire-making, implement-using, garment-wearing, habitation-dwelling. With these we have now nothing to do. We, the historians, are concerned only with what may be called the mere fringe of Time's raiment,—the last half-century of the fifty or one hundred centuries ; the rest belong to the ethnologist and the geologist, not to us. But the last fifty years, again, so far as the evolution of man from a lower to a higher stage of development is concerned, though a very quickening period, has, after all, been but one stage, and not the final stage, of a distinct phase of development. That phase has now required four centuries in which to work itself out to the point as yet reached ; for it harks back to the discovery of America, and the movement towards religious freedom which followed close upon that discovery, though having no direct connection with it. Martin Luther and Christo-

pher Columbus had little in common except that their lives overlapped ; but those two dates, 1492 and 1517,—the landfall at San Salvador and the theses nailed on the church door at Wittenberg,—those two dates began a new chapter in human history, the chapter in which is recounted the fierce struggle over the establishment of the principles of civil and religious liberty, and the recognition of the equality of men before the law. For, speaking generally but with approximate correctness, it may be asserted that, prior to the year 1500, the domestic political action and the foreign complications of even the most advanced nations turned on other issues,—dynastic, predatory, social ; but, since that date, from the wars of Charles V., of Francis I., and of Elizabeth down to our own Confederate rebellion, almost every great struggle or debate has either directly arisen out of some religious dispute or some demand for increased civil rights, or, if it had not there its origin, it has invariably gravitated in that direction. Even Frederick of Prussia, the so-called Great—that skeptical, irreligious cut-purse of the Empire,—the disciple and protector of Voltaire and the apotheosized of Thomas Carlyle,—even Frederick figured as “the Protestant Hero ;” while Francis I. was “the Eldest Son of the Church,” and Henry VIII. received from Rome the title of “Defender of the Faith.”

Since the year 1500, on the other hand, what is known as modern history has been little more than a narrative of the episodes in the struggle not yet closed against arbitrary rule, whether by a priesthood or through divine right, or by the members of a caste or of a privileged class,—whether ennobled, plutocratic or industrial. The right of the individual man, no matter how ignorant or how poor, to think, worship and do as seems to him best, provided always in so doing he does not infringe upon the rights of others, has through these four centuries been, as it still is, the underlying issue in every conflict. It seems likely, also, to continue to be the issue for a long time to come, for it never was more firmly asserted or sternly denied than now ; though to-day the opposition comes, not, as heretofore, from above, but from below, and finds its widest and most formidable expression in the teachings of those socialists who preach a doctrine of collectivism, or the complete suppression of the individual.

That proposition, however, does not concern us here and now. Our business is with the middle period of the nineteenth century, and not with the first half of the twentieth ; and no matter how closely we confine ourselves to the subject in hand, space and time will scarcely be found in which properly to develop the theme.

Two and fifty years ago, when, in the summer of 1848, Wisconsin first took shape as an organized political organization,—a new factor in man's development,—human evolution was laboring over two problems,—nationality and slavery. Slavery—that is, the ownership of one man or one class of men by another man or class of men—had existed, and been accepted as a matter of course, from the beginning. Historically the proposition did not admit of doubt. In Great Britain, bondage had only recently disappeared, and in Russia it was still the rule; while among the less advanced nations its rightfulness was nowhere challenged. With us here in America it was a question of race. The equality of whites before the law was an article of political faith; not so that of the blacks. The Africans were distinctly an inferior order of being, and, as such, not only in the Southern or slave states, but throughout the North also, not entitled to the unrestricted pursuit on equal terms of life, liberty and happiness. Hence a fierce contention,—the phase, as it presented itself on the land discovered by Columbus in 1492, of the struggle inaugurated by Luther in 1517. Its work was thus, so to speak, cut out for Wisconsin in advance of its being,—its place in the design of the great historical scheme prenatally assigned to it. How then did it address itself to its task? how perform the work thus given it to do? Did it, standing in the front rank of progress, help the great scheme along? Or, identifying itself with that reactionist movement ever on foot, did it strive with the stars in their courses?

Here, in the United States, the form in which the issue of the future took shape between 1830, when it first presented itself, and 1848, when Wisconsin entered the sisterhood of states, is even yet only partially understood, in such occult ways did the forces of development interact and exercise influence on each other. For reasons not easy to explain, also, certain states came forward as the more active exponents of antagonistic ideas,—on the one side Massachusetts; on the other, first, Virginia, and, later, South Carolina. The great and long sustained debate which closed in an appeal to force in the spring of 1861 must now be conceded as something well-nigh inevitable from fundamental conditions which dated from the beginning. It was not a question of slavery; it was one of nationality. The issue had presented itself over and over again, in various forms and in different parts of the country ever since the Constitution had been adopted,—now in Pennsylvania; now in Kentucky; now in New England; even here in Wisconsin; but, in its most concrete form, in South Carolina. It was a struggle for mastery between centripetal and centrifugal forces. At the close, slavery

was, it is true, the immediate cause of quarrel, but the seat of disturbance lay deeper. In another country, and under other conditions, it was the identical struggle which, in feudal times, went on in Great Britain, in France and in Spain, and which, more recently, and in our own day only, we have seen brought to a close in Germany and in Italy,—the struggle of a rising spirit of nationality to overcome the clannish instinct,—the desire for local independence. In the beginning Virginia stood forward as the exponent of state sovereignty. Jefferson was its mouthpiece. It was he who drew up the famous Kentucky resolutions of 1798–99, and his election to the presidency in 1800 was the recognized victory of the school of states' rights over Federalism. Later the parties changed sides,—as political parties are wont to do. Possession of the government led to a marked modification of views ; new issues were presented ; and, in 1807, the policy which took shape in Jefferson's Embargo converted the Federalist into a disunion organization, which disappeared from existence in the famous Hartford Convention of 1814–15. New England was then the centre of the party of the centrifugal force, and the issues were commercial. Fortunately, up to 1815 the issue between the spirit of local sovereignty and the ever-growing sense of nationality had not taken shape over any matter of difference sufficiently great and far-reaching to provoke an appeal to force. Not the less for that was the danger of conflict there,—a sufficient cause and suitable occasion only were wanting, and those under ordinary conditions might be counted upon to present themselves in due course of time. They did present themselves in 1832, still under the economical guise. But now the moral issue lurked behind, though the South did not yet stand directly opposed to the advancing spirit of the age. But nullification—the logical outcome of the theory of absolute state sovereignty—was enunciated by Calhoun, and South Carolina took from Virginia the lead in the reactionary movement from nationality. The danger once more passed away ; but it is obvious to us now, and, it would seem, should have been plain to any cool-headed observer then, that, when the issue next presented itself, a trial of strength would be well-nigh inevitable. The doctrine of state sovereignty, having assumed the shape of nullification, would next develop that of secession, and the direct issue over nationality would be presented.

Almost before the last indications of danger over the economical question had disappeared, slavery loomed ominously up. They did not realize it at the time, but it was now an angry wrangle over a step in the progressive evolution of the human race. The equality of man before the law and his Maker was insisted upon, and was

denied. It was a portentous issue, for in it human destiny was challenged. The desperate risk the Southern States then took is plain enough now. They entered upon a distinctly reactionary movement against two of the foremost growing forces of human development, the tendency to nationality and the humanitarian spirit. Though they knew it not, they were arraying themselves against the very stars in their courses.

Under these circumstances the secession-slavery movement between 1835 and 1860 was a predestined failure. Because of fortuitous events—the chances of the battle-field, the impulse of individual genius, the exigencies of trade or the blunders of diplomats—it might easily have had an apparent and momentary triumph; but the result upon which the slave power, as such, was intent,—the creation about the Gulf of Mexico and in the Antilles of a great semi-tropical nationality, based on African servitude and a monopolized cotton production,—this result was in direct conflict with the irresistible tendencies of mankind in its present stage of development. A movement in all its aspects radically reactionary, it could at most have resulted only in a passing anomaly.

While the Southern, or Jamestown, column of Darwin's great Anglo-Saxon migration was thus following to their legitimate conclusions the teachings of Jefferson and Calhoun,—the Virginia and South Carolina schools of state sovereignty, slavery and secession,—the distinctively northern column,—that entering through the Plymouth and Boston portals,—instinctively adhering to those principles of Church and State in the contention over which it originated,—found its way along the southern shores of the Great Lakes, through northern Ohio, southern Michigan, and northern Illinois, and then, turning north and west, spread itself over the vast region beyond the great lakes, and towards the upper waters of the Mississippi. But it is very noteworthy how the lead and inspiration in this movement still came from the original source. While in the South it passed from Virginia to Carolina, in the North it remained in Massachusetts. Three men then came forward there, voicing more clearly than any or all others what was in the mind of the community in the way of aspiration, whether moral or political. Those three were: William Lloyd Garrison, Daniel Webster and John Quincy Adams; they were the prophetic voices of that phase of American political evolution then in process. Their messages, too, were curiously divergent; and yet, apparently contradictory, they were, in reality, supplementary to each other. Garrison developed the purely moral side of the coming issue. Webster preached nationality, under the guise of love of the Union. Adams,

combining the two, pointed out a way to the establishment of the rights of man under the Constitution and within the Union. While, in a general way, much historical interest attaches to the utterances and educational influence of those three men during the period under discussion, the future political attitude of Wisconsin, then nascent, was deeply affected by them. To this subject, therefore, I propose to devote some space; for, deserving attention, I am not aware that it has heretofore received it. In doing so I cannot ignore the fact of my own descent from one of the three I have named; but I may say in my own extenuation that John Quincy Adams was indisputably a considerable public character in his time, and when I, a descendant of his, undertake to speak of that time historically, I must, when he comes into the field of discussion, deal with him as best I may, assigning to him, as to his contemporaries, the place which, as I see it, is properly his or theirs. Moreover, I will freely acknowledge that an hereditary affiliation, if I may so express it, was not absent from the feeling which impelled me to accept your call. However much others had forgotten it, I well remembered that more than half a century ago, in the days of small things, it was in this region, as in central New York and the Western Reserve, that the seed cast by one from whom I claim descent fell in the good ground where it bore fruit an hundred fold.

Recurring, then, to the three men I have named as voicing systematically a message of special significance in connection with the phase of political evolution, or of development if that word is preferred, then going on,—Garrison's message was distinctly moral and humanitarian. In a sense, it was reactionary, and violently so. In it there was no appeal to patriotism, no recognition even of nationality. On the contrary, in the lofty atmosphere of humanitarianism in which he had his being, I doubt if Garrison ever inhaled a distinctively patriotic breath; while he certainly denounced the Constitution and assailed the Union. He saw only the moral wrong of slavery, its absolute denial of the fundamental principle of the equality of men before the law and before God; and the world became his,—where freedom was there was his country. To arouse the dormant conscience of the community by the fierce and unceasing denunciation of a great wrong was his mission; and he fulfilled it; but, curiously enough, the end he labored for came in the way he least foresaw, and through the very instrumentality he had most vehemently denounced,—it came within that Union which he had described as a compact with death, and under that Constitution which he had arraigned as a covenant with hell. Yet Garri-

son was undeniably a prophet, voicing the gospel as he saw it fearlessly and without pause. As such he contributed potently to the final result.

Next, Webster. It was the mission of Daniel Webster to preach nationality. In doing so he spoke in words of massive eloquence in direct harmony with the most pronounced aspiration of his time,—that aspiration which has asserted itself and worked the most manifest results of the nineteenth century in both hemispheres,—in Spain and Prussia during the Napoleonic war, in Russia during the long Slavonic upheaval, again more recently in Germany and in Italy, and finally in the United States. The names of Stein, of Cavour and of Bismarck are scarcely more associated with this great instinctive movement of the century than is that of Daniel Webster. His mission it was to preach to this people Union, one and indivisible; and he delivered his message.

The mission of J. Q. Adams during his best and latest years, while a combination of that of the two others, was different from either. His message, carefully thought out, long retained, and at last distinctly enunciated, was his answer to the Jeffersonian theory of state sovereignty, and Calhoun's doctrine of nullification and its logical outcome, secession. With both theory and doctrine, and their results, he had during his long political career been confronted; on both he had reflected much. It was during the administration of Jefferson and on the question of union that he had, in 1807, broken with his party and resigned from the Senate; and with Calhoun he had been closely associated in the cabinet of Monroe. Calhoun also had occupied the vice-presidential chair during his own administration. He now met Calhoun face to face on the slavery issue, prophetically proclaiming a remedy for the moral wrong and the vindication of the rights of man, within the Union and under the Constitution, through the exercise of inherent war powers whenever an issue between the sections should assume the insurrectionary shape. In other words, Garrison's moral result was to be secured, not through the agencies Garrison advocated, but by force of that nationality which Webster proclaimed. This solution of the issue, J. Q. Adams never wearied of enunciating, early and late, by act, speech and letter; and his view prevailed in the end. Lincoln's proclamation of January, 1863, was but the formal declaration of the policy enunciated by J. Q. Adams on the floor of Congress in 1836, and again in 1841, and yet again in greater detail in 1842.¹ It was he who thus brought the abstract moral doctrines of Garrison into unison of movement with the nationality of Webster.

¹ See Appendix, *post*.

The time now drew near when Wisconsin was to take her place in the Union, and exert her share of influence on the national polity, and through that polity on a phase of political evolution. South Carolina, by the voice of Calhoun, was preaching reaction, through slavery and in defiance of nationality: Massachusetts, through Garrison and Webster, was proclaiming the moral idea and nationality as abstractions; while J. Q. Adams confronted Calhoun with the ominous contention that, the instant he or his had recourse to force, that instant the moral wrong could be made good by the sword wielded in defence of nationality and in the name of the Constitution.

As 1848 waxed old, the debate grew angry. J. Q. Adams died in the early months of that memorable year; but his death in no way affected the course of events. The leadership in the anti-slavery struggle on the floor of Congress and within the limits of the Constitution had passed from him four years before. He was too old longer to bear the weight of armor, or to wield weapons once familiar; but the effect of his teachings remained, and they were living realities wherever the New England column had penetrated,—throughout central New York, in the "Western Reserve," and especially in the region which bordered on Lake Michigan. Garrison still declaimed against the Union as an unholy alliance with sin; while, in the mind of Webster, his sense of the wrong of slavery was fast being overweighted by apprehension for nationality. In the mean time, a war of criminal aggression against Mexico in behalf of Calhoun's reactionary movement had been brought to a close, and the question was as to the partition of plunder. On that great issues hinged, and over it was fought the presidential election of 1848. A little more than fifty years ago, that was the first election in which Wisconsin participated. The number of those who now retain a distinct recollection of the canvass of 1848, and the questions then so earnestly debated are not many; I chance to be one of those few. I recall one trifling incident connected, not with the canvass but with the events of that year, which, for some reason, made an impression upon me, and now illustrates curiously the remoteness of the time. I have said that J. Q. Adams died in February, 1848. Carried back with much funereal state from the Capitol at Washington to Massachusetts, he was in March buried at Quincy. An eloquent discourse was then delivered over his grave by the minister of the church of which the ex-President had been a member. He who delivered it was a scholar, as well as a natural orator of high order; and, in the course of what he said he had occasion to refer to this remote region, then not yet admitted

to statehood, and he did so under the name of "the Ouisconsin." That discourse was delivered on the 11th of March, 1848; and, on the 29th of the following May, Wisconsin became a State.

Returning now to the presidential election of 1848, it will be found that Wisconsin, the youngest community in the Union, came at once to the front as the banner state of the West in support of the principles on which the Union was established, and the maintenance and vindication of those fundamental principles within the Union and through the Constitution. In that canvass the great issues of the future were distinctly brought to the front. The old party organizations then still confronted each other,—the Henry Clay Whigs were over against the Jacksonian Democracy; but in that election Lewis Cass, the legitimate candidate of the Democracy,—a Northern man with Southern principles,—so far as African slavery was concerned a distinct reactionist from the principles of the great Declaration of 1776,—Lewis Cass, of Michigan, was opposed to General Zachary Taylor, of Louisiana, himself a slaveholder, and nominated by a party which in presenting his name carefully abstained from any enunciation of political principles. He was an unknown political quantity; and no less a public character than Daniel Webster characterized his nomination as one not fit to be made. It yet remained to be seen that, practically, the plain, blunt, honest, well-meaning old soldier made an excellent President, whose premature loss was deeply and with reason deplored. His nomination, however, immediately after that of Cass, proved the signal for revolt. For the disciples of J. Q. Adams in both political camps it was as if the cry had again gone forth, "To your tents, O Israel!"—and a first fierce blast of the coming storm then swept across the land. In August the dissentients met in conference at Buffalo, and there first enunciated the principles of the American political party of the future,—that party which, permeated by the sentiment of Nationality, was destined to do away with slavery through the war power, and to incorporate into the Constitution the principle of the equality of man before the law, irrespective of color or of race. Now, more than half a century after the event, it may fairly be said of those concerned in the Buffalo movement of 1848 that they were destined to earn in the fulness of time the rare distinction of carrying mankind forward one distinct stage in the long process of evolution. In support of that movement Wisconsin was, as I have already said, the banner western state. In its action it simply responded to its early impulse received from New England and western New York. Thus the seed fell in fertile places and produced fruit an hundred fold. The law of natural selection, though not yet formulated, was at work.

The election returns of 1848 tell the story. They are still eloquent. The heart of the movement of that year lay in Massachusetts and Vermont. In those two states, taken together, the party of the future polled, in 1848, a little over 28 per cent. of the aggregate vote cast. In Wisconsin it polled close upon 27 per cent. ; and this 27 per cent. in Wisconsin is to be compared with 15 per cent. in Michigan, 12 per cent. in Illinois, less than 11 per cent. in Ohio, and not 4 per cent. in the adjoining state of Iowa. In the three neighboring states of Michigan, Illinois and Iowa, taken together, the new movement gathered into itself 12 per cent. of the total voting constituency, while in Wisconsin it counted, as I have said, over 26 per cent. Thus, in 1848, Wisconsin was the Vermont of the West ; sending to Congress as one of its three representatives Charles Durkee, a son of Vermont, the first distinctively anti-slavery man from the Northwest. Wisconsin remained the Vermont of the West. From its very origin not the smallest doubt attached to its attitude. It emphasized it in words when in 1849 it instructed one of its senators at Washington "to immediately resign his seat" because he had "outraged the feelings of the people" by dalliance with the demands of the slave power ; it emphasized it by action when five years later its highest judicial tribunal did not hesitate to declare the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 "unconstitutional and void." At the momentous election of 1860, Wisconsin threw 56 per cent. of its vote in favor of the ticket bearing the name of Abraham Lincoln ; nor did the convictions of the state weaken under the test of war. In 1864, when Wisconsin had sent into the field over 90,000 enlisted men to maintain the Union, and to make effective the most extreme doctrine of war powers under the Constitution,—even then, in the fourth year of severest stress, Wisconsin again threw 55 per cent. of its popular vote for the re-election of Lincoln. A year later the struggle ended. Throughout the ordeal Wisconsin never faltered.

Of the record made by Wisconsin in the Civil War, I am not here to speak. That field has been sufficiently covered, and covered by those far better qualified than I to work in it. I will only say, in often quoted words, that none then died more reely or in greater glory than those Wisconsin sent into the field, though then many died, and there was much glory. When figures so speak, comment weakens. Look at the record :—Fifty-seven regiments and thirteen batteries in the field ; a death-roll exceeding 12,000 ; a Wisconsin regiment (2d) first in that roll of honor which tells off the regiments of the Union which suffered most, and two other Wisconsin regiments (7th and 26th), together, fifth ; while a brigade made up three-

quarters of Wisconsin battalions shows the heaviest aggregate loss sustained during the war by any similar command, and is hence known in the history of the struggle as the "Iron Brigade." Thirteen Wisconsin regiments participated in Grant's brilliant movement on Vicksburg; five were with Thomas at Chickamauga; seven with Sherman at Mission Ridge; and, finally, eleven marched with him to the sea, while four remained behind to strike with Thomas at Nashville. Thus it may truly be said that wherever, between the 13th of April, 1861, and the 26th of April, 1865, death was reaping its heaviest harvest,—whether in Pennsylvania, in Virginia, in Tennessee, in Mississippi, in Georgia,—at Shiloh, at Corinth, at Antietam, at Gettysburg, in the salient at Spottsylvania, in the death-trap at Petersburg, or in the Peninsula slaughter-pen,—wherever during those awful years the dead lay thickest, there the men from Wisconsin were freely laying down their lives.

It is, however, no part of my present purpose to set forth here your sacrifices in the contest of 1861–65. What I have undertaken to do is to assign to Wisconsin its proper and relative place as a factor in one of the great evolutionary movements of man. As the twig was bent, the tree inclined. The sacrifices of Wisconsin life and treasure between 1861 and 1865 were but the fulfilment of the promise given by Wisconsin in 1848. The state, it is true, at no time during that momentous struggle rose to a position of unchallenged leadership either in the field or the council chamber. Among its representatives it did not number a Lincoln or a Sherman; but it did supply in marked degree that greatest and most necessary of all essentials in every evolutionary crisis, a well-developed and thoroughly distributed popular backbone.

This racial characteristic, also, I take to be the one great essential to the success of our American experiment. In every emergency which arises there is always the cry raised for a strong hand at the helm,—the ship of state is invariably declared to be hopelessly drifting. But it is in just those times of crisis that a widely diffused individuality proves the greatest possible safeguard,—the only reliable public safeguard. It is then with the state as it is with a strong, seaworthy ship manned by a hardy and experienced crew, in no way dependent on the one pilot who may chance to be at the wheel. In any stress of storm, the ship's company will prove equal to the occasion, and somehow provide for its own salvation. Under similar political conditions a community asserts, in the long run, its superiority to the accidents of fortune,—the aberrations due to the influence of individual genius, those winning numbers in the lottery of fate,—and evinces that staying power, which, no less now and

here than in Rome and Great Britain, is the only safe rock of empire. The race thus educated and endowed is the masterful race,—the master of its own destiny, it is master of the destiny of others ; and of that crowning republican quality, Wisconsin, during our period of national trial, showed herself markedly possessed. While individuals were not exceptional, the average was unmistakably high.

And this I hold to be the highest tribute which can be paid to a political community. It implies all else. Unless I greatly err, this characteristic has, in the case of Wisconsin, a profound and scientific significance of the most far-reaching character ; and so I find myself brought back to my text. As I have already more than once said, others are in every way better qualified than I to speak intelligently of the Wisconsin stock,—of the elements which enter into the brain and bone and sinew of the race now holding as its abiding-place and breeding-ground the region lying between Lake Michigan and the waters of the upper Mississippi,—between the state of Illinois on the south and Lake Superior on the north. I speak chiefly from impression, and always subject to correction ; but my understanding is that this region was in the main peopled by men and women representing in their persons what there was of the more enterprising, adventurous and energetic of three of the most thoroughly virile and, withal, moral and intellectual branches of the human family,—I refer to the Anglo-Saxon of New England descent, and to the Teutonic and the Scandinavian families. Tough of fibre and tenacious of principle, the mixed descendants from those races were well calculated to illustrate the operation of a natural law ; and I have quite failed in my purpose if I have not improved this occasion to point out how in the outset of their political life as a community they illustrated the force of Stoughton's utterance and the truth of Darwin's remarkable generalization. By their attitude and action, at once intelligent and decided, they left their imprint on that particular phase of human evolution which then presented itself. They, in so doing, assigned to Wisconsin its special place and work in the great scheme of development, and forecast its mission in the future.

I have propounded an historical theory ; it is for others, better advised, having passed upon it, to confirm or reject.

There are many other topics which might here and now be discussed, perhaps advantageously,—topics closely connected with this edifice and with the occasion,—topics relating to libraries, the accumulation of historical material, and methods of work in connection with it ; but space and time alike forbid. A selection must be

made, and, in making my selection, I go back to the fact that, representing one historical society, I am here at the behest of another historical society; and matters relating to what we call "history" are, therefore, those most germane to the day. Coming, then, here from the East to a point which, in the great future of our American development,—a century, or, perchance, two or three centuries hence,—may not unreasonably look forward to being the seat of other methods and a higher learning, I propose to pass over the more obvious, and, possibly, the more useful, even if more modest, subjects of discussion, and to try my hand at one which, even if it challenges controversy, is indisputably suggestive. I refer to certain of the more marked of those tendencies which characterize the historical work of the day. Having dealt with the sifted grain, I naturally come to speak of those who have told the tale of the sifting. Looking back, from the standpoint of 1900, over the harvested sheaves which stud the fields we have traversed, the retrospect is not to me altogether satisfactory. In fact, taken as a whole, our histories—I speak of those written by the dead only—have not, I submit, so far as we are concerned, fully met the requirements of time and place. Literary masterpieces, scientific treatises, philosophical disquisitions, sometimes one element predominates, sometimes another; but in them all something is wanting. That something I take to be an adequately developed literary sense.

In dealing with this subject, I am well aware my criticism might take a wider range. I need not confine myself to history, inasmuch as, in the matter of literary sense, the shortcomings, or the excesses, rather, of the American writer are manifest. In the Greek, and in the Greek alone, this sense seems to have been instinctive. He revealed it, and he revealed it at once, in poetry, in architecture and in art, as he revealed it in the composition of history. Of Homer we cannot speak; but Herodotus and Phidias died within six years of each other, each a father in his calling. With us Americans that intuitive literary sense, resulting in the perfection of literary form seems not less conspicuous for its absence than it was conspicuous for its presence among the Greeks. In literature the American seems to exist in a medium of stenographers and typewriters, and with a public printer at his beck and call. To such a degree is this the case that the expression I have just used—literary form—has, to many, and those not the least cultured, ceased to carry a meaning. Literary form they take to mean what they know as style; while style is, with them, but another term for word-painting. Accordingly, with altogether too many of our American writers, to be voluminous and verbose is to be great. They would

conquer by force of numbers—the number of words they use. I, the other day, chanced across a curious illustration of this in the diary of my father. Returning from his long residence in England at the time of the Civil War, he attended some ceremonies held in Boston in honor of a public character who had died shortly before. “The eulogy,” he wrote, “was good, but altogether too long. There is in all the American style of composition a tendency to diffuseness, and the repetition of the same ideas, which materially impairs the force of what is said. I see it the more clearly from having been so long out of the atmosphere.”

The failing is national; nor in this respect does the American seem to profit by experience. Take, for instance, the most important of our public documents, the inaugurals of our Presidents. We are a busy people; yet our newly elected Presidents regularly inflict on us small volumes of information, and this, too, notwithstanding the fact that in the long line of inaugural commonplaces but one utterance stands out in memory, and that one the shortest of all,—the immortal second of Lincoln. Our present chief magistrate found himself unable to do justice to the occasion, in his last annual message, in less than eighteen thousand words; and in the Congress to which this message was addressed, two senators, in discussing the “paramount” issue of the day, did so, the one in a speech of sixty-five thousand words, the other in a speech of fifty-five thousand. Webster replied to Hayne in thirty-five thousand; and Webster then did not err on the side of brevity. So in the presidential canvass now in progress. Mr. Bryan accepted his nomination in a comparatively brief speech of nine thousand words; and this speech was followed by a letter of five thousand, covering omissions because of previous brevity. President McKinley, in his turn, then accepted a renomination in a letter of twelve thousand words,—a letter actually terse when compared with his last annual message; but which Mr. Carl Schurz subsequently proceeded to comment on in a vigorous address of fourteen thousand words. Leviathans in language, we Americans need to be Methuselahs in years. It was not always so. The contrast is, indeed, noticeable. Washington’s first inaugural numbered twenty-three hundred words. Including that now in progress, my memory covers fourteen presidential canvasses; and by far the most generally applauded and effective letter of acceptance put forth by any candidate during all those canvasses was that of General Grant in 1868. Including address and signature, it was comprised in exactly two hundred and thirty words. With a brevity truly commendable, even if military, he used one word where his civilian

successor found occasion for fifty-two. As to the opponent of that civilian successor, he sets computation at defiance. Indeed, speaking of Mr. Bryan purely from the historical standpoint, I seriously doubt whether, in all human experience, any man ever before gave utterance to an equal number of words in the same space of time.

Leaving illustration, however, and returning to my theme, I will now say that in the whole long and memorable list of distinctively American literary men,—authors, orators, poets and story-tellers,—I recall but three who seem to me to have been endowed with a sense of form, at once innate and Greek; those three were Daniel Webster, Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Yet, unless moulded by that instinctive sense of form, nothing can be permanent in literature any more than in sculpture, in painting or in architecture. Not size, nor solidity, nor fidelity of work, nor knowledge of detail will preserve the printed volume any more than they will preserve the canvass or the edifice; and this I hold to be just as true of history as of the oration, the poem or the drama.

Surely, then, our histories need not all, of necessity, be designed for students and scholars exclusively; and yet it is a noteworthy fact that even to-day, after scholars and story-tellers have been steadily at work upon it for nearly a century and a half,—ever since David Hume and Oliver Goldsmith brought forth their classic renderings,—the chief popular knowledge of over three centuries of English history between John Plantagenet (1200) and Elizabeth Tudor (1536) is derived from the pages of Shakespeare. There is also a curious theory now apparently in vogue in our university circles, that, in some inscrutable way, accuracy as to fact and a judicial temperament are inconsistent with a highly developed literary sense. Erudition and fairness are the qualities in vogue, while form and brilliancy are viewed askance. Addressing now an assembly made up, to an unusual extent, of those engaged in the work of instruction in history, I wish to suggest that this marked tendency of the day is in itself a passing fashion, and merely a reactionary movement against the influence of two great literary masters of the last generation,—Macaulay and Carlyle. That the reaction had reason, I would by no means deny; but, like most decided reactions, has it not gone too far? Because men weary of brilliant colors, and mere imitators try to wield the master's brush, it by no means follows that art does not find its highest expression in Titian and Tintoretto, Rembrandt, Claude and Turner. It is the same with history. Profound scholars, patient investigators, men of a judicial turn of mind, subtle philosophers and accurate annalists empty forth upon a patient, because somewhat indifferent, read-

ing public volume after volume ; but the great masters of literary form, in history as in poetry, alone retain their hold. Thucydides, Tacitus and Gibbon are always there, on a level with the eye ; while those of their would-be successors who find themselves unable to tell us what they know, in a way in which we care to hear it, or within limits consistent with human life, are quietly relegated to the oblivion of the topmost shelf.

I fear that I am myself in danger of sinning somewhat flagrantly against the canons I have laid down. Exceeding my allotted space, I am conscious of disregarding any correct rule of form by my attempt at dealing with more subjects than it is possible on one occasion adequately to discuss. None the less I cannot resist the temptation,—I am proving myself an American ; and having gone thus far, I will now go on to the end, even though alone. There are, I hold, three elements which enter into the make-up of the ideal historian, whether him of the past or him of the future ;—these three are learning, judgment and the literary sense. A perfect history, like a perfect poem, must have a beginning, a middle and an end ; and the well proportioned parts should be kept in strict subservience to the whole. The dress, also, should be in keeping with the substance ; and both subordinated to the conception. Attempting no display of erudition, pass the great historical literatures and names in rapid review, and see in how few instances all these canons were observed. And first, the Hebrew. While the Jew certainly was not endowed with the Greek's sense of form in sculpture, in painting or in architecture, in poetry and music he was, and has since been, pre-eminent. His philosophy and his history found their natural expression through his aptitudes. The result illustrates the supreme intellectual power exercised by art. Of learning and judgment there is only pretense ; but imagination and power are there : and, even to this day, the Hebrew historical writings are a distinct literature,—we call them "The Sacred Books." We have passed from under that superstition ; and yet it still holds a traditional sway. The books of Moses are merely a first tentative effort on the road subsequently trodden by Herodotus, Livy and Voltaire ; but their author was so instinct with imagination and such a master of form that to this day his narrative is read and accepted as history by more human beings than are all the other historical works in existence combined in one mass. No scholar or man of reflection now believes that Moses was any more inspired than Homer, Julius Cæsar or Thomas Carlyle ; but the imagination and intellectual force of the man, combined with his instinct for literary form, sufficed to secure for what he wrote a unique mastery only in our day shaken.

The Greek follows hard upon the Jew ; and of the Greek I have already said enough. He had a natural sense of art in all its shapes ; and, when it came to writing history, Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon seemed mere evolutions. Of the three, Thucydides alone combined in perfection the qualities of erudition, judgment and form ; but to the last-named element, their literary form, it is that all three owe their immortality.

It is the same with the Romans—Livy, Sallust, Tacitus. The Roman had not that artistic instinct so noticeable in the Greek. He was, on the contrary, essentially a soldier, a ruler and organizer ; and a literary imitator. Yet now and again even in art he attained a proficiency which challenged his models. Cicero has held his own with Demosthenes ; and Virgil, Horace and Juvenal survive, each through a mastery of form. Tacitus, it is needless to say, is the Latin Thucydides. In him again, five centuries after Thucydides, the three essentials are combined in the highest degree. The orbs of the great historical constellation are wide apart,—the interval that divided Tacitus from Thucydides is the same as that which divided Matthew Paris from Edward Gibbon ;—twice that which divides Shakespeare from Tennyson.

Coming rapidly down to modern times, of the three great languages fruitful in historical work,—the French, English and German,—those writing in the first have alone approached the aptitude for form natural to the Greeks ; but in Gibbon only of those who have, in the three tongues, devoted themselves to historical work, were all the cardinal elements of historical greatness found united in such a degree as to command general assent to his pre-eminence. The Germans are remarkable for erudition, and have won respect for their judgment ; but their disregard of form has been innate,—indicative either of a lack of perception or of contempt.¹ Their work accordingly will hardly prove enduring. The French, from Voltaire down, have evinced a keener perception of form, nor have they been lacking in erudition. Critical and quick to perceive, they have still failed in any one instance to combine the three great attributes each in its highest degree. Accordingly, in the historical firmament they count no star of the first magnitude. Their lights have been meteoric rather than permanent.

In the case of Great Britain it is interesting to follow the familiar

¹ "Not only does a German writer possess, as a rule, a full measure of the patient industry which is required for thinking everything that may be thought about his theme, and knowing what others have thought ; he alone, it seems, when he comes to write a book about it, is imbued with the belief that that book ought necessarily to be a complete compendium of everything that has been so thought, whether by himself or others." *The Athenæum*, September 8, 1900, p. 303.

names, noting the shortcoming of each. The roll scarcely extends beyond the century,—Hume, Robertson and Gibbon constituting the solitary remembered exceptions. Of Gibbon, I have already spoken. He combined in highest degree all the elements of the historian,—in as great a degree as Thucydides or Tacitus. He was an orb of the first order; and it was his misfortune that he was born and wrote before Darwin gave to history unity and a scheme. Hume was a subtle philosopher, and his instinctive mastery of form has alone caused his history to survive. He was not an investigator in the modern sense of the term, nor was he gifted with an intuitive historical instinct. Robertson had fair judgment and a well-developed though in no way remarkable sense of form; but he lacked erudition, and, as compared with Gibbon, for example, was content to accept his knowledge at second hand. Telling his story well, he was never master of his subject.

Coming down to our own century, and speaking only of the dead, a series of familiar names at once suggest themselves,—Mitford, Grote and Thirlwall; Arnold and Merivale; Milman, Lingard, Hallam, Macaulay, Carlyle, Buckle, Froude, Freeman and Green,—naming only the more conspicuous. Mitford was no historian at all; merely an historical pamphleteer. His judgment was inferior to his erudition even, and he had no sense of form. Grote was erudite, but he wrote in accordance with his political affinities, and what is called the spirit of the time and place; and that time and place were not Greece, nor the third and fourth centuries before Christ. He had, moreover, no sense of literary form, for he put what he knew into twelve volumes, when human patience did not suffice for six. Thirlwall was erudite in a way, and a thinker and writer of unquestionable force; but his work on Greece was written to order, and is what is known as a "standard history." Correct, but devoid of inspiration, it is slightly suggestive of a second-class epic. Arnold is typical of scholarship and insight; his judgment is excellent; but of literary art, so conspicuous in his son, there is no trace. Merivale is scholarly and academic. Milman was hampered by his church training, which fettered his judgment; learned, as learning went in those days, there is in his writings nothing that would attract readers or students of a period later than his own. Lingard was another church historian. A correct writer, he tells England's story from the point of view of Rome. Hallam is deeply read, and judicial; but the literary sense is conspicuously absent. His volumes are well-nigh unreadable. Freeman is the typical modern historian of the original-material-and-monograph school. He writes irrespective of the readers. Learned beyond

compare, he cumpers the shelves of our libraries with an accumulation of volumes which are not literature.

Of Henry Thomas Buckle and of John Richard Green I will speak together, and with respectful admiration. Both were prematurely cut off, almost in what with historical writers is the period of promise; for, while Green at the time of his death was forty-seven, Buckle was not yet forty-one. What they did, therefore,—and they both did much,—was indicative only of what they might have done. Judged by that,—*ex pede Herculem*,—I hold that they come nearer to the ideal of what a twentieth-century historian should be than any other writers in our modern English tongue. That Buckle was crude, impulsive, hasty in generalization and paradoxical in judgment is not to be gainsaid; but he wrote before Darwin; and, when he published his history, he was but thirty-six. What might he not have become had he been favored with health, and lived to sixty! Very different in organization, he and Green alike possessed in high degree the spirit of investigation and the historical insight, combined with a well-developed literary sense. Men of untiring research, they had the faculty of expression. Artists as well as scholars, they inspired. Their early death was in my judgment an irreparable loss to English historical lore and the best historical treatment.

I come now to Macaulay, Carlyle and Froude, the three literary masters of the century who have dealt with history in the English tongue; and I shall treat of them briefly, and in the inverse order. Froude is redeemed by a sense of literary form; as an historian he was learned, but inaccurate, and his judgment was fatally defective. He was essentially an artist. Carlyle was a poet rather than an historian. A student, with the insight of a seer and a prophet's voice, his judgment was fatally biassed. A wonderful master of form, his writings will endure; but rather as epics in prose than as historical monuments. Macaulay came, in my judgment, nearer than any other English writer of the century to the great historical stature; but he failed to attain it. The cause of his failure is an instructive as well as an interesting study.

Thomas Babington Macaulay is unquestionably the most popular historian that ever wrote. His history, when it appeared, was the literary sensation of the day, and its circulation increased with each succeeding volume. Among historical works, it alone has in its vogue thrown into the shade the most successful novels of the century,—those of Scott, Thackeray and Dickens, *Jane Eyre*, *Robert Elsmere*, and even *Richard Carvel*, the last ephemeral sensation; but, of the three great attributes of the historian, Macaulay was endowed with only one. He was a man of vast erudition; and,

moreover, he was gifted with a phenomenal memory, which seemed to put at his immediate disposal the entire accumulation of his omnivorous reading. His judgment was, however, defective; for he was, from the very ardor of his nature,¹ more or less of a partisan, while the wealth of his imagination and the exuberance of his rhetoric were fatal to his sense of form. He was incomparably the greatest of historical *raconteurs*, but the fascination of the story overcame his sense of proportion, and he was buried under his own riches. For it is a great mistake to suppose, as so many do, that what is called style, no matter how brilliant, or how correct and clear, constitutes in itself literary form; it is a large and indispensable element in literary form, but neither the whole, nor indeed the greatest part of it. The entire scheme, the proportion of the several parts to the whole and to each other, the grouping and the presentation, the background and the accessories constitute literary form; the style of the author is merely the drapery of presentation. Here was where Macaulay failed; and he failed on a point which the average historical writer, and the average historical instructor still more, does not as a rule even take into consideration. Macaulay's general conception of his scheme was so imperfect as to be practically impossible; and this he himself, when too late, sadly recognized. His interest in his subject and the warmth of his imagination swept him away,—they were too strong for his sense of proportion. Take, for instance, two such wonderful bits as his account of the trial of the seven bishops, and his narrative of the siege of Londonderry. They are masterpieces; but they should be monographs. They are in their imagery and detail out of all proportion to any general historical plan. They imply a whole which would be in itself an historical library rather than a history. On the matter of judgment it is not necessary to dwell. Macaulay's work is unquestionably history, and history on a panoramic scale; but the pigments he used are indisputably Whig. Yet his method was instinctively correct. He had his models and his scheme,—he made his preliminary studies,—he saw his subject as a whole, and in its several parts; but he labored under two disadvantages:—in the first place, like Gibbon, he was born and wrote before the discoveries of Darwin had

¹ "It is well to realize that this greatest history of modern times was written by one in whom a distrust in enthusiasm was deeply rooted. This cynicism was not inconsistent with partiality, with definite prepossessions, with a certain spite. The conviction that enthusiasm is inconsistent with intellectual balance was engrained in his mental constitution, and confirmed by study and experience. It might be reasonably maintained that zeal for men or causes is an historian's undoing, and that 'reserve sympathy'—the principle of Thucydides—is the first lesson he has to learn." J. B. Bury, Introduction to his edition (1896) of Gibbon, I. lxxvii.-lxxviii.

given its whole great unity to history ; and, in the second place, he had not thought his plan fully out, subordinating severely to it both his imagination and his rhetoric. Accordingly, so far as literary form was concerned, his history, which in that respect above all should, with his classic training, have been an entire and perfect chrysolite, was in fact a monumental failure. It was not even a whole ; it was only a fragment.

Coming now to our own American experience, and still speaking exclusively of the writings of the dead, it is not unsafe to say that there is as yet no American historical work which can call even for mention among those of the first class. The list can speedily be passed in review,—Marshall, Irving, Prescott, Hildreth, Bancroft, Motley, Palfrey and Parkman. Except those yet living, I do not recall any others who would challenge consideration. That Marshall was endowed with a calm, clear judgment, no reader of his judicial opinions would deny ; but he had no other attribute of an historian. He certainly was not historically learned, and there is no evidence that he was gifted with any sense of literary proportion. Irving was a born man of letters. With a charming style and a keen sense of humor, he was as an historical writer defective in judgment. Not a profound or accurate investigator, as became apparent in his *Columbus* and his *Washington*, his excellent natural literary sense was but partially developed. Perhaps he was born before his time ; perhaps his education did not lead him to the study of the best models ; but, however it came about, he failed, and failed indisputably, in form. Prescott was a species of historical pioneer,—an adventurer in a new field of research and of letters. Not only was he, like Macaulay and the rest, born before Darwin and the other great scientific lights of the century had assigned to human history its unity, limits and significance, but Prescott was not a profound scholar, nor yet a thorough investigator ; his judgment was by no means either incisive or robust, and his style was elegant, as the phrase goes, rather than tersely vigorous. He wrote, moreover, of that which he never saw, or made himself thoroughly part of even in imagination. Laboring under great disadvantages, his course was infinitely creditable ; but his portrait in the gallery of historians is not on the eye line. Of Hildreth, it is hardly necessary to speak. Laborious and persevering, his investigation was not thorough ; indeed he had not taken in the fundamental conditions of modern historical research. With a fatally defective judgment, he did not know what form was.

George Bancroft was in certain ways unique, and, among writers and students, his name cannot be mentioned without respect. He

was by nature an investigator. His learning and philosophy cannot be called sound, and his earlier manner was something to be forever avoided; but he was indefatigable as a collector, and his patience knew no bounds. He devoted his life to his subject; and his life came to a close while he was still dwelling on the preliminaries to his theme. A partisan, and writing in support of a preconceived theory, his judgment was necessarily biassed; while, as respects literary form, though he always tended to what was better, he never even approximately reached what is best. He, too, like Macaulay, failed to grasp the wide and fundamental distinction between a proportioned and complete history and a thorough historical monograph. His monumental work, therefore, is neither the one nor the other. As a collection of monographs, it is too condensed and imperfect; as a history, it is cumbersome, and enters into unnecessary detail.

From a literary point of view Motley is unquestionably the most brilliant of American historical writers. He reminds the reader of Froude. Not naturally a patient or profound investigator, he yet forced himself to make a thorough study of his great subject, and he was gifted with a remarkable descriptive power. A man of intense personality, he was, however, defective in judgment, if not devoid of the faculty. He lacked calmness and method. He could describe a siege or a battle with a vividness which, while it revealed the master, revealed also the historian's limitations. With a distinct sense of literary form, he was unable to resist the temptations of imagination and sympathy. His taste was not severe; his temper the reverse of serene. His defects as an historian were consequently as apparent as are his merits as a writer.

Of Palfrey, the historian, I would speak with the deep personal respect I entertained for the man. A typical New Englander, a victim almost of that "terrible New England conscience," he wrote the history of New England. A scholar in his way and the most patient of investigators, he had, as an historian, been brought up in a radically wrong school, that of New England theology. There was in him not a trace of the skeptic; not a suggestion of the humorist or easy-going philosopher. He wrote of New England from the inside and in close sympathy with it. Thus, as respects learning, care and accuracy, he was in no way deficient, while he was painstaking and conscientious in the extreme. His training and mental characteristics, however, impaired his judgment, and he was quite devoid of any sense of form. The investigator will always have recourse to his work; but, as a guide, its value will pass

away with the traditions of the New England theological period. From the literary point of view the absence of all idea of proportion renders the bulk of what he wrote impossible for the reader.

Of those I have mentioned, Parkman alone remains ; perhaps the most individual of all our American historians, the one tasting most racy of the soil. Parkman did what Prescott failed to do, what it was not in Prescott ever to do. He wrote from the basis of a personal knowledge of the localities in which what he had to narrate occurred, and the characteristics of those with whom he undertook to deal. To his theme he devoted his entire life, working under difficulties even greater than those which so cruelly hampered Prescott. His patience under suffering was infinite ; his research was indefatigable. In this respect, he left nothing to be desired. While his historical judgment was better than his literary taste, his appreciation of form was radically defective. Indeed he seemed almost devoid of any true sense of proportion. The result is that he has left behind him a succession of monographs of more or less historical value or literary interest, but no complete, thoroughly designed and carefully proportioned historical unit. Like all the others, his work lacks form and finish.

The historical writers of more than an hundred years have thus been passed in hasty review, nor has any nineteenth-century compeer of Thucydides, Tacitus and Gibbon been found among those who have expressed themselves in the English tongue. Nor do I think that any such could be found in other tongues ; unless, perchance, among the Germans, Theodor Mommsen might challenge consideration. Of Mommsen's learning there can be no question. I do not think there can be much of his insight and judgment. The sole question would be as to his literary form ; nor, in that respect, judging by the recollection of thirty years, do I think that, so far as his history of Rome is concerned, judgment can be lightly passed against him. But, on this point, the verdict of time only is final. Before that verdict is in his case rendered, another half-century of probation must elapse.¹

¹ " C'est sous ces deux aspects—qui sont en réalité les deux faces de l'esprit de Mommsen, le savant et le politique—qu'il convient d'étudier cet ouvrage.

" Dans l'exposé scientifique de l'*Histoire Romaine* on ne sait ce qu'on doit le plus admirer, ou de la science colossale de l'auteur ou de l'art avec laquelle elle est mise en œuvre.

" C'était une entreprise colossale que celle de résumer tous les travaux sur la matière depuis Niebuhr. Mommsen lui-même avait contribué à ce travail par la quantité fabuleuse de mémoires qu'il avait écrits sur les points les plus spéciaux du droit romain, de l'archéologie ou de l'histoire. Or tout cela est assimilé d'une manière merveilleuse dans une narration historique qui est un des chefs-d'œuvre de l'historiographie. L'histoire romaine est une œuvre extraordinaire dans sa condensation, comme il n'en existe nulle

There is still something to be taken into consideration. I have as yet dealt only with the writers ; the readers remain. During the century now ending, what changes have here come about ? For one, I frankly confess myself a strong advocate of what is sometimes rather contemptuously referred to as the popularization of history. I have but a limited sympathy with those who, from the etherealized atmosphere of the cloister, whether monkish or collegiate, seek truth's essence and pure learning only, regardless of utility, of sympathy or of applause. The great historical writer, fully to accomplish his mission, must, I hold, be in very close touch with the generation he addresses. In other words, to do its most useful work, historical thought must be made to permeate what we are pleased to call the mass ; it must be infiltrated through that great body of the community which, moving slowly and subject to all sorts of influences, in the end shapes national destinies. The true historian,—he who most sympathetically, as well as correctly, reads to the present the lessons to be derived from the experience of the past,—I hold to be the only latter-day prophet. That man has a message to deliver ; but, to deliver it effectively, he must, like every successful preacher, understand his audience ; and, to understand it, he must either be instinctively in sympathy with it, or he must have made a study of it. Of those instinctively in sympathy, I do not speak. That constitutes genius, and genius is a law unto itself ; but I do maintain that instructors in history and historical writers who ignore the prevailing literary and educational conditions, therein make a great mistake. He fails fatally who fails to conform to his environment ; and this is no less true of the historian than of the novelist or politician.

In other words, what have we to say of those who read ? What do we know of them ? Not much, I fancy. In spite of our public libraries, and in spite of the immensely increased diffusion of printed

autre au monde, enfermant dans des dimensions si restreintes (3 volumes in 8°) tant de choses et de si bonnes choses. Mommsen raconte d'une manière si attrayante que dès les premières lignes vous êtes entraîné. Ses grands tableaux sur les premières migrations des peuples en Italie, sur les débuts de Rome, sur les Etrusques, sur la domination des Hellènes en Italie ; ses chapitres sur les institutions romaines, le droit, la religion, l'armée et l'art ; sur la vie économique, l'agriculture, l'industrie et le commerce ; sur le développement intérieur de la politique romaine ; sur les Celtes et sur Carthage ; sur les péripéties de la Révolution romaine depuis les Grecques à Jules César ; sur l'Orient grec, la Macédoine ; sur la soumission de la Gaule : tout cela forme un ensemble admirable.

“ Comme peintre de grands tableaux historiques, je ne vois parmi les historiens contemporains qu'un homme qui puisse être comparé à Mommsen, c'est Ernest Renan : c'est la même touche large, le même sens des proportions, le même art de faire voir et de faire comprendre, de rendre vivantes les choses par les détails typiques qui se gravent pour toujours dans la mémoire.” Guillaud, *L'Allemagne Nouvelle et le Historien* (1900), pp. 121-122.

matter through the agency of those libraries and of the press, what those who compose the great mass of the community are reading, what enters into their intellectual nutriment, and thence passes into the secretions of the body politic,—this, I imagine, is a subject chiefly of surmise. The field is one upon which I do not now propose to enter. Too large, it is also a pathless wilderness. I would, however, earnestly commend it to some more competent treatment at an early convention of librarians or publishers. To-day we must confine ourselves to history. For what, in the way of history, is the demand? Who are at present the popular historical writers? How can the lessons of the past be most readily and most effectually brought home to the mind and thoughts of the great reading public, vastly greater and more intelligent now than ever before?

This is something upon which the census throws no light. There is a widespread impression among those more or less qualified to form an opinion that the general capacity for sustained reading and thinking has not increased or been strengthened with the passage of the years. On the contrary, the indications, it is currently supposed, are rather of emasculation. Everything must now be made easy and short. There is a constant demand felt, especially by our periodical press, for information on all sorts of subjects,—historical, philosophical, scientific,—but it must be set forth in what is known as a popular style, that is, introduced into the reader in a species of sugared capsule, and without leaving any annoying taste on the intellectual palate. The average reader, it is said, wants to know something concerning all the topics of the day; but, while it is highly desirable he should be gratified in this laudable, though languid, craving, he must not be fatigued in the effort of acquisition, and he will not submit to be bored. It is then further argued that this was not the case formerly; that in what are commonly alluded to as “the good old times,”—always the times of the grandparents,—people had fewer books, and fewer people read; but those who did read, deterred neither by number of pages nor by dryness of treatment, were equal to the feat of reading. To-day, on the contrary, almost no one rises to more than a magazine article; a volume appalls.

This is an extremely interesting subject of inquiry, were the real facts only attainable. Unfortunately they are not. We are forced to deal with impressions; and impressions, always vague, are usually deceptive. At the same time, when glimpses of a more or less remote past do now and again reach us, they seem to indicate mental conditions calculated to excite our special wonder. We do know, for instance, that in the olden days,—before public libraries and peri-

odicals, and the modern cheap press and the Sunday newspaper were devised,—when books were rarities, and reading a somewhat rare accomplishment,—the Bible, Shakespeare, *Paradise Lost*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Robinson Crusoe*, the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, Barrow's *Sermons* and Hume's *History of England* were the standard household and family literature; and the Bible was read and reread until its slightest allusions passed into familiar speech. Indeed the Bible, in King James's version, may be said to have been for the great mass of the community,—those who now have recourse to the Sunday paper,—the sum and substance of English literature. In this respect it is fairly open to question whether the course of evolution has tended altogether toward improvement. Now and again, however, we get one of these retrospective glimpses which is simply bewildering, and while indulging in it, one cannot help pondering over the mental conditions which once apparently prevailed. The question suggests itself, were there giants in those days?—or did the reader ask for bread, and did they give him a stone? We know, for instance, what the public library and circulating library of to-day are. We know, to a certain extent, what the reading demand is, and who the popular authors are. We know that, while history must content itself with a poor one in twenty, the call for works of fiction is more than a third of the whole, while nearly eighty per cent. of the ordinary circulation is made up of novels, story books for children, and periodicals. It is the lightest form of pabulum. This, in 1900. Now, let us get a glimpse of "the good old times."

In the year 1790, a humorous rascal named Burroughs—once widely known as "the notorious Stephen Burroughs"—found himself stranded in a town on Long Island, New York, a refugee from a Massachusetts gaol and whipping-post, the penalties incurred in or at both of which he had richly merited. In the place of his refuge, Burroughs served as the village schoolmaster; and, being of an observant turn of mind, he did not fail presently to note that the people of the place were "very illiterate," and almost entirely destitute of books of any kind, "except school books and bibles." Finding among the younger people of the community many "possessing bright abilities and a strong thirst for information," Burroughs asserts that he bestirred himself to secure the funds necessary to found the nucleus of a public library. Having in a measure succeeded, a meeting of "the proprietors" was called "for the purpose of selecting a catalogue of books;" and presently the different members presented lists "peculiar to their own tastes." Prior to this meeting it had been alleged that the people generally anticipated

that the books would be selected by the clergyman of the church, and would "consist of books of divinity, and dry metaphysical writings ; whereas, should they be assured that histories and books of information would be procured," they would have felt very differently. And now, when the lists were submitted, "Deacon Hodges brought forward 'Essays on the Divine Authority for Infant Baptism,' 'Terms of Church Communion,' 'The Careful Watchman,' 'Age of Grace,' etc. ; Deacon Cook's collection was 'History of Martyrs,' 'Rights of Conscience,' 'Modern Pharisees,' 'Defence of Separates ;' Mr. Woolworth exhibited 'Edwards against Chauncy,' 'History of Redemption,' 'Jennings's Views,' etc. ; Judge Hurlbut concurred in the same ; Dr. Rose exhibited 'Gay's Fables,' 'Pleasing Companion,' 'Turkish Spy,' while I," wrote Burroughs, "for the third time recommended 'Hume's History,' 'Voltaire's Histories,' 'Rollin's Ancient History,' 'Plutarch's Lives,' etc."

It would be difficult to mark more strikingly the development of a century, than by thus presenting Hume's History and Rollin as typical of what was deemed light and popular reading at one end of it, and the Sunday newspaper at the other. As I have already intimated, they were either giants in those days, or husks supplied milk for babes. Recurring, however, to present conditions, the popular demand for historical literature is undoubtedly vastly larger than it was a century ago ; nor is it by any means so clear as is usually assumed that the solid reading and thinking power of the community has at all deteriorated. That yet remains to be proved. A century ago, it is to be borne in mind, there were no public libraries at all, and the private collections of books were comparatively few and small. It is safe, probably, to assume that there are a hundred, or even a thousand, readers now to one then. On this head nothing even approximating to what would be deemed conclusive evidence is attainable ; but the fair assumption is that, while the light and ephemeral, knowledge-made-easy reading is a development of these latter years, it has in no way displaced the more sustained reading and severe thought of the earlier time. On the contrary, that also has had its share of increase. Take Gibbon, for instance. A few years ago, an acute and popular English critic, in speaking of the newly edited *Memoirs* of Gibbon, used this language :—"All readers of the *Decline and Fall*—that is to say, all men and women of a sound education," etc. If Mr. Frederic Harrison was correct in his generalization in 1896, certainly more could not have been said in 1796 ; and, during the intervening hundred years, the class of those who have received "a sound educa-

tion" has undergone a prodigious increase. Take Harvard College, for instance; in 1790 it graduated thirty-three students, and in 1896 it graduated four hundred and eight,—an increase of more than twelvefold. In 1796, also, there were not a tenth part of the institutions of advanced education in the country which now exist. The statistics of the publishing houses and the shelves of the book-selling establishments all point to the same conclusion. Of course, it does not follow that because a book is bought it is also read; but it is not unsafe to say that twenty copies of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* are called for in the bookstores of to-day to one that was called for in 1800.

On this subject, however, very instructive light may be derived from another quarter. I refer to the public library. While discussing the question eighteen months ago, I ventured to state that, "in the case of one public library in a considerable Massachusetts city I had been led to conclude, as the result of examination and somewhat careful inquiry, that the copy of the *Decline and Fall* on its shelves had, in over thirty years, not once been consecutively read through by a single individual." I have since made further and more careful inquiry on this point from other, and larger, though similar institutions, and the inference I then drew has been confirmed and generalized. I have also sought information as to the demand for historical literature, and the tendency and character of the reading so far as it could be ascertained, or approximately inferred. I have submitted my list of historical writers, and inquired as to the call for them. Suggestive in all respects, the results have, in some, been little less than startling. Take for instance popularity, and let me recur to Macaulay and Carlyle. I have spoken of the two as great masters in historical composition,—comparing them in their field to Turner and Millet in the field of art. Like Turner and Millet, they influenced to a marked extent a whole generation of workers that ensued. To such an extent did they influence it that a scholastic reaction against them set in,—a reaction as distinct as it was strong. Nevertheless, in spite of that reaction, to what extent did the master retain his popular hold? I admit that my astonishment was great when I learned that between 1880, more than twenty years after his death, and 1900, besides innumerable editions issued on both sides of the Atlantic, the authorized London publishers of Macaulay had sold in two shapes only,—and they appear in many other shapes,—80,000 copies of his *History* and 90,000 of his *Miscellanies*. Of Carlyle and the call for his writings I could gather no such specific particulars; but in reply to my inquiries, I was generally advised that, while the English demand had been large,

there was no considerable American publishing house which had not brought out partial or complete editions of his works. They also were referred to as "innumerable."¹ In other words, when a generation that knew them not had passed away, the works of the two great masters of historical literary form in our day sold beyond all compare with the productions of any of the living writers most in vogue; and this while the professorial dry-as-dust reaction against those masters was in fullest swing.

With a vast amount of material unused, and much still unsaid, I propose, in concluding, to trespass still further on your patience while I draw a lesson to which the first portion of my discourse will contribute not less than the second. A great, as well as a very voluminous, recent historical writer has coined the apothegm,—“History is past politics, and politics are present History.” The proposition is one I do not now propose to discuss, except to suggest that, however it may have been heretofore, what is known as politics will be but a part, and by no means the most important part, of the history of the future. The historian will look deeper. It was President Lincoln who said in one of the few immortal utterances of the century,—an utterance, be it also observed, limited to two hundred and fifty words,—that this our nation was “conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal;” and that it was for us highly to resolve “that government of the people, by the people, for the people, should not perish from the earth.” It was James Russell Lowell, who, when asked in Paris by the historian Guizot many years since, how long the Republic of the United States might reasonably be expected to endure, happily replied,—“So long as the ideas of its founders continue dominant.” In the first place, I hold it not unsafe to say that, looking forward into a future not now remote, the mission of the Republic and the ideas of the founders will more especially rest in the hands of those agricultural communities of the Northwest, where great aggregations of a civic populace are few, and the principles of natural selection have had the fullest and the freest play in the formation of the race. Such is Wisconsin; such Iowa; such Minnesota. In their hands, and in the hands of communities like them, will rest the ark of our covenant.

¹ At least twenty (20) American publishing houses have brought out complete editions of Macaulay, both his *Miscellanies* and the *History of England*. Many of these editions have been expensive, and they seem uniformly to have met with a ready demand. Almost every American publishing house of any note has brought out editions of some of the *Essays*. The same is, to a less extent, true of Carlyle. Seven (7) houses have brought out complete editions of his works; while three (3) others have put on the market imported editions, bearing an American imprint. Separate editions of the more popular of his writings—some cheap, others *de luxe*—have been brought out by nearly every American publishing concern.

In the next place, for the use and future behoof of those communities I hold that the careful and intelligent reading of the historical lessons of the past is all important. Without that reading, and a constant emphasis laid upon its lessons, the nature of that mission and those ideas to which Lincoln and Lowell alluded cannot be kept fresh in mind. This institution I accordingly regard as the most precious of all Wisconsin's endowments of education. It should be the sheet-anchor by which, amid the storms and turbulence of a tempestuous future, the ship of state will be anchored to the firm holding-ground of tradition. It is to further this result that I to-day make appeal to the historian of the future. His, in this community, is a great and important mission; a mission which he will not fulfil unless he to a large extent frees himself from the trammels of the past, and rises to an equality with the occasion. He must be a prophet and a poet, as well as an investigator and an annalist. He must cut loose from many of the models and most of the precedents of the immediate past, and the educational precepts now so commonly in vogue. He must perplex the modern college professor by asserting that soundness is not always and of necessity dull, and that even intellectual sobriety may be carried to an excess. Not only is it possible for a writer to combine learning and accuracy with vivacity, but to be read and to be popular should not in the eyes of the judicious be a species of stigma. Historical research may, on the other hand, result in a mere lumber of learning; and, even in the portrayal of the sequence of events, it is to a man's credit that he should strive to see things from the point of view of an artist, rather than, looking with the dull eye of a mechanic, seek to measure them with the mechanic's twelve-inch rule. I confess myself weary of those reactionary influences amid which of late we have lived. I distinctly look back with regret to that more spiritual and more confident time when we of the generation now passing from the stage drew our inspiration from prophets, and not from laboratories. So to-day I make bold to maintain that the greatest benefactor America could have—far more immediately influential than any possible President or senator or peripatetic political practitioner, as well as infinitely more so in a remote future—would be some historical writer, occupying perhaps a chair here at Madison, who would in speech and book explain and expound, as they could be explained and expounded, the lessons of American history and the fundamental principles of American historical faith.

It was Macaulay who made his boast that, disregarding the traditions which constituted what he contemptuously termed "the dig-

nity of history," he would set forth England's story in so attractive a form that his volumes should displace the last novel from the work-table of the London society girl. And he did it. It is but the other day that an American naval officer suddenly appeared in the field of historical literature, and, by two volumes, sensibly modified the policy of nations. Here are precept and example. To accomplish similar results should, I hold, be the ambition of the American historian. Popularity he should court as a necessary means to an end; and that he should attain popularity, he must study the art of presentation as much and as thoughtfully as he delves amid the original material of history. Becoming more of an artist, rhetorician and philosopher than he now is, he must be less of a pedant and colorless investigator. In a word, going back to Moses, Thucydides and Herodotus; Tacitus, Gibbon and Voltaire; Niebuhr, Macaulay, Carlyle, Buckle, Green, Mommsen and Froude, he must study their systems, and, avoiding the mistakes into which they fell, thoughtfully accommodating himself to the conditions of the present, he must prepare to fulfil the mission before him. He will then in time devise what is so greatly needed for our political life, the distinctively American historical method of the future. Of this we have as yet had hardly the promise, and that only recently through the pages of Fiske and Mahan; and I cannot help surmising that it is to some Eastern seed planted here in the freer environment of the more fruitful West that we must look for its ultimate realization.

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

APPENDIX.

THE full record of J. Q. Adams's utterances on this most important subject has never been made up. (See *Works of Charles Sumner*, VI. 19-23, VII. 142.) Historically speaking, it is of exceptional significance: and, accordingly, for convenience of reference, a partial record is here presented.

In 1836 Mr. Adams represented in Congress what was then the Massachusetts "Plymouth" district. In April of that year the issue, which, just twenty-five years later, was to result in overt civil war, was fast assuming shape; for on the 21st of the month, the battle of San Jacinto was fought, resulting immediately in the independence of Texas, and more remotely in its annexation to the United States and the consequent war of spoliation (1846-48) with Mexico. At the same time petitions in great number were pouring into Congress from the Northern states asking for the abolition of slavery, and the prohibition of the domestic slave-trade in the District of Columbia; the admission into the Union of Arkansas, with a constitution recognizing slavery, was also under consideration. In the course of a long personal letter dated April 4, 1836, written

to the Hon. Solomon Lincoln, of Hingham, a prominent constituent of his, Mr. Adams made the following incidental reference to the whole subject, indicative of the degree to which the question of martial law as a possible factor in the solution of the problem then occupied his mind :

"The new pretensions of the Slave representation in Congress, of a right to refuse to receive Petitions, and that Congress have no Constitutional power to abolish slavery or the slave trade in the District of Columbia forced upon me so much of the discussion as I did take upon me, but in which you are well aware I did not and could not speak a tenth part of my mind. I did not, for example, start the question whether by the Law of God and of Nature man can hold property, hereditary property in man—I did not start the question whether in the event of a servile insurrection and War, Congress would not have complete, unlimited control over the whole subject of slavery even to the emancipation of all the slaves in the State where such insurrection should break out, and for the suppression of which the freemen in Plymouth and Norfolk Counties, Massachusetts, should be called by Acts of Congress to pour out their treasures and to shed their blood. Had I spoken my mind on those two points the sturdiest of the abolitionists would have disavowed the sentiments of their champion."

A little more than seven weeks after thus writing, Mr. Adams made the following entries in his diary :

May 25th. "At the House, the motion of Robertson, to recommit Pinckney's slavery report, with instructions to report a resolution declaring that Congress has no constitutional authority to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, as an amendment to the motion for printing an extra number of the report, was first considered. Robertson finished his speech, which was vehement. . . .

"Immediately after the conclusion of Robertson's speech I addressed the Speaker, but he gave the floor to Owens, of Georgia, one of the signing members of the committee, who moved the previous question, and refused to withdraw it. It was seconded and carried, by yeas and nays. . . .

"The hour of one came, and the order of the day was called—a joint resolution from the Senate, authorizing the President to cause rations to be furnished to suffering fugitives from Indian hostilities in Alabama and Georgia. Committee of the whole on the Union, and a debate of five hours, in which I made a speech of about an hour, wherein I opened the whole subject of the Mexican, Indian, negro, and English war."

It was in the course of this speech that Mr. Adams first enunciated the principle of emancipation through martial law, exercised under the Constitution in time of war. He did so in the following passage :

"Mr. Chairman, are you ready for all these wars? A Mexican war? A war with Great Britain if not with France? A general Indian war? A servile war? And, as an inevitable consequence of them all, a civil war? For it must ultimately terminate in a war of colors as well as of races. And do you imagine that, while with your eyes open you are wilfully kindling, and then closing your eyes and blindly rushing into them : do you imagine that while in the very nature of things, your own

Southern and Southwestern States must be the Flanders of these complicated wars, the battlefield on which the last great battle must be fought between slavery and emancipation; do you imagine that your Congress will have no constitutional authority to interfere with the institution of slavery *in any way* in the States of this Confederacy? Sir, they must and will interfere with it—perhaps to sustain it by war; perhaps to abolish it by treaties of peace; and they will not only possess the constitutional power so to interfere, but they will be bound in duty to do it by the express provisions of the Constitution itself. From the instant that your slaveholding States become the theatre of war, civil, servile or foreign, from that instant the war powers of Congress extend to interference with the institution of slavery in every way in which it can be interfered with, from a claim of indemnity for slaves taken or destroyed, to the cession of the State burdened with slavery to a foreign power.”

The following references to this speech are then found in the diary:

May 29th.—“I was occupied all the leisure of the day and evening in writing out for publication my speech made last Wednesday in the House of Representatives—one of the most hazardous that I ever made, and the reception of which, even by the people of my own district and State, is altogether uncertain.”

June 2d.—“My speech on the distribution of rations to the fugitives from Indian hostilities in Alabama and Georgia was published in the National Intelligencer of this morning, and a subscription paper was circulated in the House for printing it in a pamphlet, for which Gales told me there were twenty-five hundred copies ordered. Several members of the House of both parties spoke of it to me, some with strong dissent.”

June 19th.—“My speech on the rations comes back with echoes of thundering vituperation from the South and West, and with one universal shout of applause from the North and East. This is a cause upon which I am entering at the last stage of life, and with the certainty that I cannot advance in it far; my career must close, leaving the cause at the threshold. To open the way for others is all that I can do. The cause is good and great.”

So far as the record goes, the doctrine was not again propounded by Mr. Adams until 1841. On the 7th of June of that year he made a speech in the House of Representatives in support of a motion for the repeal of the Twenty-first Rule of the House, commonly known as “the Atherton Gag.” Of this speech, no report exists; but in the course of it he again enunciated the martial law theory of emancipation. The next day he was followed in debate by C. J. Ingersoll, of Pennsylvania, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, who took occasion to declare that what he had heard the day previous had made his “blood curdle with horror.”

“Mr. Adams here rose in explanation, and said he did not say that in the event of a servile war or insurrection of slaves, the Constitution of the United States would be at an end. What he did say was this, that in the event of a servile war or insurrection of slaves, if the people of the free States were called upon to suppress the insurrection, and to spend their blood and treasure in putting an end to the war—a war in which the distinguished Virginian, the author of the Declaration of Independence, had said that ‘God has no attribute in favor of the master’—

then he would not say that Congress might not interfere with the institution of slavery in the States, and that, through the *treaty-making power*, universal emancipation might not be the result."

The following year the contention was again discussed in the course of the memorable debate on the "Haverhill Petition." Mr. Adams was then bitterly assailed by Henry A. Wise, of Virginia, and Thomas F. Marshall, of Kentucky. Mr. Adams at the time did not reply to them on this head; but, on the 14th of the following April, occasion offered, and he then once more laid down the law on the subject, as he understood it, and as it was subsequently put in force:—

"I would leave that institution to the exclusive consideration and management of the States more peculiarly interested in it, just as long as they can keep within their own bounds. So far I admit that Congress has no power to meddle with it. As long as they do not step out of their own bounds, and do not put the question to the people of the United States, whose peace, welfare, and happiness are all at stake, so long I will agree to leave them to themselves. But when a member from a free State brings forward certain resolutions, for which, instead of reasoning to disprove his positions, you vote a censure upon him, and that without hearing, it is quite another affair. At the time this was done I said that, as far as I could understand the resolutions proposed by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Giddings), there were some of them for which I was ready to vote, and some which I must vote against; and I will now tell this House, my constituents, and the world of mankind, that the resolution against which I should have voted was that in which he declares that what are called the slave States have the exclusive right of consultation on the subject of slavery. For that resolution I never would vote, because I believe that it is not just, and does not contain constitutional doctrine. I believe that so long as the slave States are able to sustain their institutions without going abroad or calling upon other parts of the Union to aid them or act on the subject, so long I will consent never to interfere.

"I have said this, and I repeat it; but if they come to the free States and say to them you must help us to keep down our slaves, you must aid us in an insurrection and a civil war, then I say that with that call comes a full and plenary power to this House and to the Senate over the whole subject. It is a war power. I say it is a war power, and when your country is actually in war, whether it be a war of invasion or a war of insurrection, Congress has power to carry on the war, and must carry it on according to the laws of war; and by the laws of war an invaded country has all its laws and municipal institutions swept by the board, and martial law takes the place of them. This power in Congress has, perhaps, never been called into exercise under the present Constitution of the United States. But when the laws of war are in force, what, I ask, is one of those laws? It is this: that when a country is invaded, and two hostile armies are set in martial array, the commanders of both armies have power to emancipate all the slaves in the invaded territory. Nor is this a mere theoretic statement. The history of South America shows that the doctrine has been carried into practical execution within the last thirty years. Slavery was abolished in Colombia, first, by the Spanish General, Morillo, and, secondly, by the American General, Bolivar. It was abolished by virtue of a military command given at the

head of the army, and its abolition continues to be law to this day. It was abolished by the laws of war, and not by municipal enactments; the power was exercised by military commanders under instructions, of course, from their respective Governments. And here I recur again to the example of General Jackson. What are you now about in Congress? You are passing a grant to refund to General Jackson the amount of a certain fine imposed upon him by a Judge under the laws of the State of Louisiana. You are going to refund him the money, with interest; and this you are going to do because the imposition of the fine was unjust. And why was it unjust? Because General Jackson was acting under the laws of war, and because the moment you place a military commander in a district which is the theatre of war, the laws of war apply to that district. . . .

"I might furnish a thousand proofs to show that the pretensions of gentlemen to the sanctity of their municipal institutions under a state of actual invasion and of actual war, whether servile, civil, or foreign, is wholly unfounded, and that the laws of war do, in all such cases, take the precedence. I lay this down as the law of nations. I say that the military authority takes for the time the place of all municipal institutions, and slavery among the rest; and that, under that state of things, so far from its being true that the States where slavery exists have the exclusive management of the subject, not only the President of the United States but the commander of the army has power to order the universal emancipation of the slaves. I have given here more in detail a principle which I have asserted on this floor before now, and of which I have no more doubt, than that you, Sir, occupy that Chair. I give it in its development, in order that any gentleman from any part of the Union may, if he thinks proper, deny the truth of the position, and may maintain his denial; not by indignation, not by passion and fury, but by sound and sober reasoning from the laws of nations and the laws of war. And if my position can be answered and refuted, I shall receive the refutation with pleasure; I shall be glad to listen to reason, aside, as I say, from indignation and passion. And if by the force of reasoning my understanding can be convinced, I here pledge myself to recant what I have asserted.

"Let my position be answered; let me be told, let my constituents be told, the people of my State be told,—a State whose soil tolerates not the foot of a slave,—that they are bound by the Constitution to a long and toilsome march under burning summer suns and a deadly Southern clime for the suppression of a servile war; that they are bound to leave their bodies to rot upon the sands of Carolina, to leave their wives and their children orphans; that those who cannot march are bound to pour out their treasures while their sons or brothers are pouring out their blood to suppress a servile, combined with a civil or a foreign war, and yet there exists no power beyond the limits of the slave State where such war is raging to emancipate the slaves. I say, let this be proved—I am open to conviction; but until that conviction comes I put it forth not as a dictate of feeling, but as a settled maxim of the laws of nations, that in such a case the military supersedes the civil power."

The only comment on this utterance made by Mr. Adams in his diary was the following:—"My speech on this day stung the slaveocracy to madness."

Here the proposition rested until 1861, when the course of events brought into forcible application the principles abstractly enunciated twenty years before by Mr. Adams.

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